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Letter dated 17 April 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the position of the Republic of Belarus regarding the unilateral sanctions of the European Union on Belarus (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 17 (a), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Andrei **Dapkiunas**

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Annex to the letter dated 17 April 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus on the imposition by the European Union of sanctions against the Republic of Belarus

[Original: Russian]

Minsk, 30 March 2012

Since January 2011, the European Union and a number of countries that have associated themselves with its policy have been systematically expanding unilateral sanctions against the Republic of Belarus, barring a growing number of its citizens from entering their territory and freezing any financial operations involving more and more private companies based in Belarus. Sanctions have now been imposed against 243 individuals and 32 enterprises.

The European Union cites as grounds for its actions its own understanding of how the 2010 presidential elections in Belarus were conducted and of actions taken by the Belarusian authorities vis-à-vis certain representatives of civil society, as well as of the role that the individuals and enterprises in question allegedly played in these events.

The trumped-up nature of these claims is obvious given that the European Union blacklist includes, among others, a considerable number of journalists, judges, prosecutors, electoral commissioners, college and university provosts and school principals, businesspeople and even a hospital medical director.

Moreover, in January 2012, the Council of the European Union determined that restrictions could be placed upon all "persons or entities benefiting from or supporting the Lukashenka regime". In other words, any citizens of Belarus who labour for the national good or receive material compensation or social assistance from the State may find themselves hostage to European Union policy and targeted by its sanctions.

In practice, the purpose of the sanctions is thus to coerce Belarusian citizens and companies either to take up a position or to take steps in which the European Union has a vested interest, rather than those that derive directly from national law, professional ethics or the interests of said individuals or companies.

The European Union's actions are therefore unilateral and coercive in nature, infringing upon the legal rights and liberties of a large number of natural and legal persons, and are designed to interfere generally in the internal affairs of a sovereign State.

The European Union's decisions on Belarus contravene the Charter of the United Nations, principles and norms of international law, the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, adopted by the General Assembly on 24 October 1970, and numerous relevant and regularly adopted resolutions of the Assembly and other United Nations bodies.

In particular, in a recent resolution on this topic, resolution 66/186 on unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries, the General Assembly urged the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures and to condemn and reject the imposition of the use of such measures as a means of political and economic coercion. A Human Rights Council resolution on human rights and unilateral coercive measures adopted at that body's nineteenth session in March 2012 sets out similar provisions.

Moreover, economic sanctions targeting legal persons in the Republic of Belarus directly affect the income of those companies' employees and their families. The European Union is essentially punishing the people of Belarus for exercising their right to freely choose their national political, economic and social model.

Restrictive measures of this kind also run counter to the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Under Principle VI of the Final Act, participating States "will refrain from any intervention, direct or indirect, individual or collective, in the internal or external affairs falling within the domestic jurisdiction of another participating State, regardless of their mutual relations. ... They will likewise in all circumstances refrain from any other act of military, or of political, economic or other coercion designed to subordinate to their own interest the exercise by another participating State of the rights inherent in its sovereignty and thus to secure advantages of any kind."

Under Principle VIII, by virtue of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, all peoples always have the right, in full freedom, to determine, when and as they wish, their internal and external political status, without external interference, and to pursue as they wish their political, economic, social and cultural development.

Acts of intimidation, economic pressure and coercion are utterly unacceptable in international affairs and serve only to escalate tensions between sovereign States and in the international arena generally.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus calls upon the European Union to lift without condition all sanctions and restrictive measures targeting Belarus.